



To: Julie Kirkelos, Town Clerk, Town of Lincoln

From: Donna Herrington, Consultant, JAAC

Re: Mandatory Masks and Impact on People with Disabilities

Date: July 8, 2020

Dear Julie,

As requested by Councillor Rintjema, I have polled JAAC members to get their opinions on the mandatory mask issue.

As expected, responses were varied according to their individual disability experiences. Some are in favour of using masks as a mandatory measure while others indicate that masks produce a number of physical and communication barriers.

For example, mask use makes lip reading and hearing difficult for persons who are hard-of-hearing or deaf. Further, masks tend to muffle voices making hearing difficult for persons who are blind or who have visual disabilities where following verbal cues are essential to communication. Masks are also extremely difficult for persons who get easily winded due to their conditions.

Others are in favour of masks as they feel vulnerable during personal conversations, for example, those who use wheelchairs and are "below" people during conversations.

It would be the recommendation of the JAAC that staff use masks where social distancing cannot be maintained. Further, we would recommend the use of face shields and/or masks with clear shields that allow for lip reading. Where social distancing is possible, we would recommend not using masks to facilitate easier and more accessible communication.

We understand that this is a difficult issue and hope that accessibility needs can be accommodated during this challenging time.